



PCOS, Pelvic Pain & Sexual Wellbeing
A guide to understanding and supporting your body

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Sexual challenges are common in PCOS — you are not “broken.”

Talk Openly (When You're Ready):

- Share your experiences with:
- A trusted partner
- A therapist
- A pelvic health or sexual medicine specialist

Encourage Eroticism:

- Promoting feeling strength and beauty – art classes, dance/movement, improv classes, hiking or mindful walking

Mind Body Approach:

- Gentle movement (e.g., yoga, stretching)
- Mindfulness or meditation for body connection
- Counseling for anxiety, body image, or trauma

How Pelvic Pain Affects Sexual Wellbeing

Pain can impact your physical and emotional intimacy. You might notice:

- Discomfort during or after intercourse
- Reduced libido or arousal
- Fear of pain leading to avoidance of intimacy

Consider Pelvic Floor Physical Therapy

- Pelvic floor therapists help with:
- Pelvic floor muscles: tension, awareness, strength.
- Pain with sex (arousal, penetration, orgasm, afterwards)
- Bladder or bowel issues

Pelvic floor muscles and sex

- The pelvic floor muscles line the bottom of the pelvic girdle and surround the openings for peeing, pooping, and the vagina.
- When we experience fear, anxiety, or pain, the pelvic floor muscles respond by tensing
- This tension can affect vaginal penetration, peeing and passing bowel movements. The tension can also affect arousal and orgasm due to the compression of nerves as well as blocking important blood flow.
- These muscles are very emotionally connected, requiring you and your providers to take a whole-person approach to improving sexual wellness.

Explore Comfort-Oriented Intimacy

- Go slow; communicate with your partner. Warm up. Listen to your body. Comfort leads to connection
- Focus on non-penetrative intimacy. Penetration is not the only form of sex
- Moisture is important to reduce friction, rawness and possibly tearing during penetrative play. Hormonal changes can decrease self-lubrication
- Use lubricant, preferably water-based or silicone-based. Examples of water based: Slippery Stuff, Good Clean Love. Silicone-based: Uberlube, Pjur Infinity
- Try different positions to reduce pressure on the pelvis. If deep penetration is problematic, look into the Ohnut depth-limiting silicone rings by The Pelvic People.



Practice diaphragmatic breathing

- Diaphragmatic breathing helps to calm the nervous system and reduce muscle guarding.
- **How to do it:**
 - Start in a comfortable position with back support, sitting or laying.
 - Place one hand on your chest and the other on your abdomen and relax your jaw and shoulders.
 - Take a slow, gentle breath, letting the abdomen and rib cage expand. You want your stomach and ribs to move outward the same in all directions. Then breathe out and let your abdomen fall back to its relaxed starting position.
 - Tips: imagine your ribs are expanding on inhalation like you are opening up an umbrella. The belly hand should move more than the rib hand. Sometimes it helps to imagine you are breathing into the waistband of your pants.
 - Belly breathing helps the nervous system calm down while also relaxing and opening the pelvic floor muscles
 - Experiment with other positions: Try side lying, lying on your back with pillows supporting your knees relaxed open, or you on top. Experiment with what feels best for you

Use tools to help the pelvic floor muscles relax

- These are only tools, not necessities. If these sound scary to perform on your own this is a sign to reach out to a pelvic floor therapist and/or sexual health therapist for further support
- Dilators are cylinders similar to tampons that gradually increase in width (some have different lengths as well). They can be used to practice penetration in a therapeutic way (overall vaginal tissue stretching, general muscular relaxation)
- Pelvic wands are usually curved, don't come in variable widths, and can apply specific pressure to individual pelvic floor muscles and deep structures (specific muscular relaxation, specific vaginal tissue stretching)
- Our favorite brand for both dilators and pelvic wands is [Intimate Rose](#). There are many brands that make dilators. Just be sure the materials are body safe and can be cleaned after use
- Newer to the market is the Kiwi by The Pelvic People: a vibration tool to help with insertion pain. It comes with two speeds of vibration and a broad and specific tip to help improve blood flow, relax the muscles and calm the nervous system.
- If you choose to use these tools, start alone and in a comfortable time and space. Once you are familiar with the tools and how your body responds, you can progress to using these tools with your partner to prepare your body for sexual play. However, it's ok to primarily use these tools alone.

Resources/Readings

- Our Bodies, Our Selves (2011). The Boston Women's Health Collective. Women's Bodies,
- Reclaiming Desire: 4 Keys to Finding Your Lost Libido (2009). Andrew Goldstein, MD & Marianne Brandon, PhD
- Better Sex Through Mindfulness: How Women Can Cultivate Desire (2018). Lori A. Brotto, PhD
- Come As You Are: The Surprising New Science that Will Transform Your Sex Life (2015). Emily Nagoski, PhD
- When Sex Hurts (2011). Andrew Goldstein, MD
- Becoming Cliterate (2018). Laurie Mintz, PhD

Seek Professional Help if you experience:

- Sharp or severe pelvic pain
- Bleeding after sex
- Persistent discomfort affecting your quality of life
- Emotional distress about sex or intimacy